

April 21, 2011

Mr. Charles Faultry, Branch Chief
Superfund Division
U.S. EPA, Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200
Dallas, TX 75202-2733

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO EPA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING REMEDIAL
SYSTEM EVALUATION FOR HOMESTAKE SITE

Dear Mr. Faultry:

This letter responds to your March 24, 2011, letter which recommends that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) work with Homestake Mining Company (HMC) to implement a number of recommendations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Remedial System Evaluation (RSE) report for the HMC site near Milan, New Mexico. NRC understands that EPA's goal with the RSE was to identify ways to make HMC's remedial system more efficient and/or effective at achieving the site closure goals, and that the recommendations in the RSE report did not imply any deficiencies in the HMC site remediation. Although NRC agrees that some of the RSE recommendations may result in remedial process efficiencies, the RSE report does not provide the level of detailed information that would be necessary to justify imposing the recommendations on HMC.

On January 25, 2010, NRC, EPA, New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and HMC met to discuss the RSE recommendations. At this meeting NRC reminded the participants that HMC is ultimately responsible for remediating the site to meet the groundwater protection standards established by the agencies and documented in HMC's License No. SUA-1471, License Condition 35 B. As noted in the RSE report, the current remediation systems have been making significant progress in improving ground water quality at the site. Given the significant progress being made at the site, NRC does not plan to specifically require HMC to implement any of the recommendations. However, HMC will have to address some of the issues (e.g., the potential for long-term reducing conditions and rebound) in the revised Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for the site, to demonstrate compliance with the license termination criteria.

As acknowledged in your letter, NRC is currently reviewing a revised CAP submitted by HMC in January 2006. During the January 2010 meeting, HMC expressed a willingness to evaluate a number of the RSE recommendations to determine if remedial process efficiencies can be gained. NRC will work with HMC to incorporate any revisions requested by HMC into the CAP. As always, EPA and NMED will be given an opportunity to review and comment on NRC's evaluation of the CAP before it is approved.

C. Faultry

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If you have comments or questions regarding this letter, please contact me at 301-415-7295, or John Buckley at 301-415-6607 or john.buckley@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/ by B. Watson for

Keith L. McConnell, Deputy Director
Decommissioning and Uranium Recovery
Licensing Directorate
Division of Waste Management
and Environmental Protection
Office of Federal and State Materials
and Environmental Management Programs

Docket No.: 40-8903
License No.: SUA-1471

cc: Homestake Service List

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